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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Charitable Institute for Protecting Social Victims, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is hereby circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 January 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Secret Prisons in Yemen and Torturing Prisoners

Reports received on United Arab Emirates secret prisons in Yemen and torturing of prisoners are causing concern for international human rights activists while according to eye witness reports, horrific acts of torture against prisoners have been widespread in this period. Various forms of torture used in these prisoners and abusing prisoners, have resulted in a number of these prisoners going on hunger strikes.

According to information received through interviews with former inmates and the relatives of some prisoners and human rights lawyers and Yemeni military officials, these secret prisones are located in military bases, ports and one of the airports and even a number of villas and night clubs.

Although these individuals have been imprisoned on the pretext of the fight against Al-Qaeda and acts of terror, but the use of brutal torture methods are in direct conflict with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Convention against Torture, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other regional documents regarding prohibition of torture and other cruel and inhuman and degrading treatment, rights that are recognised as the most fundamental and important of rights of prisoners.

These prisons which are directly run by UAE forces or Yemeni forces that are being trained by UAE forces, are witness to sexual rape, brutal beatings and the use of inhuman methods that include shoving prisoners blindfolded heads into trash cans which are some of the methods used in the said prisons. Furthermore it is said that thousands of Yemenis have disappeared in these secret prisons networks. Also physical and psychological tortures have resulted in many of the prisoners going on hunger strikes. It must not be left without mention that physical abuses that have taken place in these secret prisons leave negative psychological effects. The appearance and spread of contracted and non-contractual diseases, low physical hygiene levels, bad diets, lack of access to sports and recreational services and inadequate medical care are all a collective of factors which threaten the general conditions of prisoners and as a result their hygiene and mental health; and now if we add the physical abuse and torture to this collective, the end result will be catastrophic.

As we know torture is a form of abnormal living experience which can cause the occurrence of countless physical and mental harms. Most psychiatrists and psychologists believe that aside from the mental conditions before they are subjected to torture, the occurrence of torture is so powerful in itself that causes physical and mental side-effects. Nevertheless the psychological repercussions of torture, occurs in an area of the mental and characteristic development of the individual and social, political and cultural factors, and on this basis it can leave bad effects on all of society.

After torture, the tortured individual experiences damages that are completely new for him, and at the same time revolting, shameful, unacceptable, incomprehensible and hurtful Torture, be it physical or mental, leaves behind lasting injuries and wounds the acceptance of which at times is not easily possible. Furthermore when the prisoner is released, he is faced with the challenge of adapting to the society. In other words the transfer of the prisoner to the home and society does not take place in simple terms and in most instances the prisoner takes home with him the prison and its after-effects and it takes a long time for the negative effects and repercussions of the prison to be released, that is if there is any home or family left.

The Charitable Institute for Protecting Social Victims expresses its concern on the critical situation in Yemen and the military and civilian interference of other countries in the domestic issues of the country, draws the attention of the international community towards the negative and long-term repercussions of this crisis on the mental health of the people of the country and calls for all international and influential players to cooperate for the purpose of putting an end to this humanitarian crisis and quickly find a lasting solution for the Yemeni conflict; because with the prolonging of this conflict the treatment of physical and mental injuries from the conflict will need a longer period of time, and even that might be impossible.

We call upon the Special Rapporteur on Torture to investigate the existing claims to the existence of these types of secret prisons as soon as possible and through the submission of a report make the UAE government accountable for these clear acts of torture.

Also we call upon the Arbitrary Detention Working Group to reveal the conditions in these secret prisons in a report and present recommendations to the Human Rights Council, UAE and Yemen in this regard.